

## LutherFacts #24

During March 1522, Martin Luther left the safety of Wartburg Castle and his disguise as "Knight Georg" to return to Wittenberg. During his absence from the town, colleague and fellow reformer Andreas Karlstadt had begun to implement changes in local church practices. Though three years younger than Luther, Karlstadt had gained his doctorate in theology earlier and in 1512, as chancellor of the University, he had awarded Luther his doctorate.

Over the next five years, both men worked tirelessly and in tandem advocating church reforms. In 1516, Karlstadt anticipated Luther by posting his own theses—151 of them—for debate, focusing on clerical abuses. In 1519, the two men took turns debating Johann Eck at Leipzig. Thus, after the Diet of Worms, when Pope Leo X excommunicated Luther, he also did the same to Karlstadt. When Luther was forced into hiding, Karlstadt returned to Wittenberg and initiated reforms that both men had long believed were necessary. On Christmas Day 1521, for example, he had presided over a revised order of communion wearing secular clothing. Rather than whisper the words of institution, he spoke them loudly, using German instead of Latin. Karlstadt also let communicants take both the bread and wine on their own during the service.

These were all changes that Luther endorsed and that would be widely instituted throughout Germany in the years to come. At the same time, Luther disagreed with Karlstadt on many other issues, such as the destruction and removal of religious icons from the churches. The greatest difference between the two men, however, was yet to come. When it eventually arrived, they would take such contrasting positions that their disagreement threatened the very basis of the Reformation.